

Bicker

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](http://archiveofourown.org/works/12542312) at <http://archiveofourown.org/works/12542312>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Categories:	F/M , M/M
Fandom:	Supernatural
Relationships:	Castiel/Dean Winchester , Jessica Moore/Sam Winchester
Characters:	Castiel (Supernatural) , Dean Winchester , Sam Winchester , Jessica Moore
Additional Tags:	Established Relationship , Established Castiel/Dean Winchester , Oblivious Sam Winchester , Old Married Couple , Bickering , John Winchester and Mary Winchester are Divorced , Nurse Castiel , Police Officer Dean , Protective Dean Winchester , Alternate Universe- No Supernatural , POV Sam Winchester
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2017-10-29 Words: 7,947 Chapters: 1/1

Bicker

by [followyourenergy](#)

Summary

Sam Winchester is nervous. He's taking his girlfriend of eight months, Jess, to meet his brother, Dean, and his brother's best friend and roommate, Castiel. Sam loves his brother and loves Cas, but it seems like all the longtime friends do is bicker and he hates it. Sure enough, from the moment they arrive Dean and Cas are at it. Sam thinks he knows what's best for the two of them, but Sam ends up learning a few things about love and relationships that he never expected.

Notes

I wrote this one while suffering a bit of writer's block on a longer fic I'm working on. It was so fun to write and just the thing to break the block. Enjoy!

“This could be awkward.”

“Sam, you worry too much. It’ll be fine! They seem super nice when we chat on Skype.”

“Jess, you didn’t have to grow up with them.”

Sam and his girlfriend of eight months, Jess, are waiting at the baggage carousel for Jess’ checked bag on a sunny Monday afternoon. When they catch sight of the simple black bag with the neon green bandanna tied to it, Sam reaches out for it and takes it in hand, using his other hand to hold Jess’.

“I can take that,” she offers, but he brushes her away.

“I got it, hon.”

They pick up their rental car, a mid-size sedan, and Sam rattles off an address for Jess to enter into the GPS. He is tense and Jess notices.

“Relax, Babycakes.” She plants several kisses on his cheek. “What are you so worried about? Think they won’t like me?”

He leans into her kisses as he puts the car in drive. “They’ll love you, but I’m afraid you’ll be uncomfortable around them. They fight all the time.”

“They seem to get along fine to me.”

“Well, they can behave on a phone call, but they aren’t so great after you’ve been with them for a while. They bicker about everything.”

“It can’t be that bad. They’ve been friends for, what, twenty years?”

“Yeah, just over.”

“Something must keep them going, then.”

Sam takes her hand and rubs her knuckles with his thumb. “Don’t get me wrong, I mean, I love them both, and on their own they’re cool... but I honestly don’t know how they haven’t killed each other yet.”

“It’s only a few days, then we head out to see my family. We’ll all survive, I’m sure.” She squeezes his hand and uses her free hand to check her phone.

Sam looks out the windshield and thinks about Dean and Castiel. They’ve been friends ever since Dean stole Castiel’s police car toy in Kindergarten and made him cry. Sam isn’t sure how two people become friends that way, or how they stay friends. They were always the type of friends to get along famously and then have huge blowouts that would make them avoid each other for days. When they were little, it was about toys, or who got to be Batman when they played superheroes, or one of them accusing the other of cheating in some board

or video game. When they were older, it was about music or sports or girls (and later, boys). Sam thought for sure it was over between them their senior year when Cas told Dean that Lisa was cheating on him and Dean accused him of being jealous. That was a big one. But they found their way back to each other and even went to the same state university. They roomed together and, when Dean dropped out in favor of community college, they got an apartment together. Now both 26, they've been living together for years. He doesn't get to see them often – hasn't been with them in person for two years, in fact, with school and Dean's and Cas' schedules – but all he can remember of their visits is bickering.

"Here we are," Sam says as he slides into a space in front of a block of apartment buildings. They climb out and take their luggage, then climb the stairs to the third floor, apartment 3B. Sam knocks on the door and turns to Jess. "Brace yourself." She rolls her eyes affectionately.

After knocking a second time, the door swings open and they are greeted by Cas, a smiling, blue-eyed man with wet, dark hair and flushed cheeks, followed shortly after by Sam's brother Dean, a slightly taller man with wet, light brown hair wearing sweatpants and an inside-out shirt and chasing a cat who runs out the door and between their legs.

"Come back here, you little bastard!" he calls as the cat scampers down the hall. Sam is trying to comprehend why a cat is running out of their apartment, since Dean is allergic.

"Hello! Come in!" Cas says as he opens the door wider, heedless of Dean's troubles capturing the feline. "Nice to see you, Sam, and so great to meet you in person, Jess." He offers them both hugs as Dean trudges back into the apartment, carrying a ball of fur that looks tiny in his large hands.

"Give," Cas says to Dean, indicating the cat. "Your cat-wrangling skills leave something to be desired."

"He's squirmy!"

"I told you to just leave him closed up in the bathroom, but you swore you had him..."

"The bathroom was steamy!"

"He would've been fine for a few seconds, Papa Bear."

"Sorry I didn't want your stupid cat to suffocate..."

Cas cocks an eyebrow. "Uh huh, just *my* cat, right. You know, he could've stayed in the kitchen if you bothered to use the baby gate..."

"I'm not using a fucking baby gate for a cat..."

"Hi! Hi! We're here!" Sam says, interrupting the bickering that has already started between the longtime friends. They stop and Dean turns with a large smile toward his brother.

"Hey, man, good to see you," Dean says, tugging his brother into a hug, then turning and pulling Jess into a hug of her own. "And you, lovely Jess. Pleasure to meet you. Sorry you got stuck with the uglier brother."

“On the bright side, you also got the less stubborn one,” Cas smirks, and Dean doesn’t even look as he throws his arm out to whack Cas lightly while still holding Jess. “Hey, watch the cat. Oh wait...” he says, letting the joke remain implied and earning another whack to his arm for his troubles. Jess laughs in delight.

“Bags can go right over here,” Cas says to Sam. He leads him into a bedroom with Dean’s double bed that Sam remembers from their first apartment, a desk, and shelves of figurines and Lego models. “Sorry about the clutter. Dean’s still reliving his childhood.”

“I heard that!” Dean calls from the living room.

“You were meant to!” Cas trills in response.

Cas gives them a brief tour of the apartment, pointing as he goes. “Living room you’ve seen. Kitchen, bathroom, and that’s the master bedroom. Laundry is in the basement. Deck. Parking lot. That’s pretty much it. Drinks? Dean’s going to get started on supper.”

Cas pours wine for Jess, grabs a bottle of the beer they bought specifically for Sam, then holds another two beers – one like Sam’s, another with a different label on it – and asks Dean which he wants.

“Stop. You know which one.”

“Dean...”

“Cas,” he says as he roughly grabs the one in Cas’ right hand with a scowl. “Don’t bother asking when you know the answer.”

“Fine, fine,” he says, putting the other one away and taking a second bottle of beer like Dean’s from the fridge. He sits down on the couch, Dean plopping down next to him soon after.

“What are you drinking?” Jess asks curiously as she eyes the bottle.

“Gluten-free beer,” Cas explains. “I can’t have anything containing gluten.”

Sam frowns. “Why are you drinking it, Dean?”

“Solidarity,” Dean says as he raises it to his lips.

Cas rolls his eyes. “He thinks he’s going to poison me.”

“Listen, I just don’t want to deal with your moaning and groaning all day, that’s all.” He blows Cas a kiss in jest and Cas shoves him in the shoulder.

A few minutes later, Dean steps into the kitchen to check on the meatballs he made earlier that are now sizzling in their juices in the oven. Cas comes into the kitchen and stirs the pasta before opening the cabinets to take down glasses and plates.

“I saw that. Get out of the pot.”

“I just stirred it.”

“I already stirred it.”

“Whatever.” He sets the table and comes back to the stove, this time to watch Dean stir a pot of homemade marinara. He leans over his shoulder. “Did you put some sugar in that?”

“Hell no!”

“Dean, your sauce tends to be acidic.”

“Cas, it’s marinara *sauce*, not marinara *frosting*. Your sauce is way too sweet, dude.”

“I have heartburn just looking at your sauce.”

“Smart ass. Jess, Sam, come try this, would you?”

Sam drags himself reluctantly to the kitchen, Jess following with a bounce in her step. Cas gives them spoons and they dip in and take small bites of the rich, red sauce. Dean and Cas stand side by side, eyeing each other and the couple before them.

“Well?” Dean asks.

“Um... what do you think, hon?” Sam asks his girlfriend.

“Whipped,” Dean mutters under his breath. Cas elbows him; his pursed lips hide a smile. Dean winks.

“Hmm. I don’t know. Seems a little acidic.”

“Ha!” Cas says, turning to Dean. “See?”

“No one asked you,” Dean pouts as he stirs in a bit of sugar. “Try it now.”

They both try it again, along with Cas, who says, “I think that’s better, Dean. Try it.” He holds his spoon out for Dean to taste, and Dean nods approvingly.

“Yeah, alright. At least it doesn’t taste like tomato-flavored cotton candy like yours.”

“Hardee har har. Did you measure how much you put in there so we know for next time?”

“Course not.”

“Of course not.” Cas rolls his eyes and turns away to fill glasses with water.

“It’s good, Dean,” Jess laughs. “You two are so funny.”

“A regular Laurel and Hardy,” Sam mutters.

Dinner conversation is light and mostly focused on Sam and Jess, so Sam relaxes. Jess comments on how similar to “real” pasta the gluten-free pasta tastes, and Sam forgot they

were eating something gluten-free. He then wonders why Dean is eating it when he doesn't have to, but figures he'll get the "solidarity" thing again so doesn't bother asking. Everyone is behaving themselves when they retire to the living room and Jess sees Scattergories.

"Ooh, I haven't played that in forever!" she enthuses. "Can we?"

"God, no," Sam groans. "They argue constantly over that game."

Dean and Cas share a laugh that clearly means there's a private joke in there that Jess doesn't know. When she asks, Dean asks in return, "Okay, so under the category of Things That Are Frozen, don't you think 'Frozen Foods' should count?"

"It should *not* count!" Cas exclaims with exasperation, slapping his hands on his thighs. They argue for a while and Jess snickers while Sam hides his face. They decide to avoid that game for the time being and play cards instead. While Jess and Sam do their best not to put the other at a disadvantage, Dean and Cas are fierce competitors who try to gain the advantage at every turn. In Uno, Cas saves his Draw Twos and Draw Fours for Dean as much as he can. In Contract Rummy, Dean purposely goes for cards that he knows Cas can use. They cackle with delight or swear under their breath. When they team up, Cas and Jess versus the brothers, Dean and Cas each encourage their partners to be ruthless. Sam is completely embarrassed. Jess cannot stop laughing.

Cas follows Sam and Jess to the bedroom while Dean gets ready for bed. He asks them about breakfast preferences, then says, "Jess, I hope we didn't scare you. Sam is used to it, but Dean and I can be a lot to handle for someone who doesn't know us."

"Oh, don't be silly! I had fun!" Cas smiles and says he's glad she's enjoyed herself so far.

Sam, exhausted, says before Cas leaves, "Hey, thanks for the room. You guys didn't have to go to all this trouble, though. We could've slept on the couch."

Cas furrows his brow. "Why would we make you do that? This bed is perfectly usable."

"Just... you know... hate to inconvenience you. You guys are in each other's faces as it is, and now that we're here you are even more."

Cas chuckles and says, "It's no problem, Sam. We're happy you're here. Good night." He closes the door and Sam collapses on the bed.

"See what I told you?" he says to Jess.

"I don't know what you mean. They are adorable. Why didn't you tell me they're together?"

"What do you mean, together?"

"Like a couple, silly."

"They're not. We're sleeping in Dean's *bedroom*."

“Hon, they are *totally* a couple. This might’ve been Dean’s room once, but it’s clearly not anymore. How do you not know this?”

“They argue all the time. They practically killed each other playing Uno. They’re not a couple.”

“Oh honey,” she says as she kisses him sweetly, “you have a lot to learn.”

The coffee is brewing and the mood is lighthearted when Jess and Sam round the corner into the kitchen Tuesday morning. Dean turns the radio to the classic rock station. Cas does his best DJ impression as he looks at Dean and says, “Comin’ atcha live from the Jurassic Era, here’s another hit that’ll make your scales shake and your tails twitch!” Dean narrows his eyes at him when Cas starts flapping his arms and making screeching sounds in imitation of a pterodactyl.

“Oh, you’re so funny,” Dean says in acknowledgment of Cas’ jibe about his “old” music, then starts singing the song on the radio into his spatula. Cas immediately launches into the backup lyrics despite teasing him a moment before. Sam watches them closely, looking for any sign that they are, indeed, a couple. They seem to be getting along this morning, at least, except for Cas’ crack at Dean’s music. Jess pours coffee for both her and Sam and their hosts plunk down their plates, heaping with eggs and bacon, before sitting to join them.

“Oh, gotta grab the slow cooker for later while I’m thinking of it,” Dean remembers as he stands up again. Cas immediately stands up with him.

“I’ll get it,” he says, lightly moving Dean aside.

“I’ve got it, jeez,” Dean says, trying to move Cas out of the way.

“Dean, your shoulder...”

“Is fine, *Mom*, thanks,” Dean grouses. They jostle each other as they vie for position in front of the tall cabinet where the slow cooker is apparently located.

Sam sighs and walks over to the cabinet. He can see where this is going. He reaches overhead and moves several heavy cast iron pots and pans down to the counter in order to reach the slow cooker, which is wedged in the back. He nearly drops one on his head when it shifts in his hands. “Holy shit, those are heavy,” he mutters.

“Yes, *Dean*, those are *heavy*, did you hear your brother? Do you *see* why I didn’t want you to grab those with an injured shoulder?” Cas chastises Dean with his arms folded.

“Yes, *Mom*, I heard,” Dean says, his arms also folded.

“I don’t want you aggravating it.”

“I know, I know. Sam, just put it in the corner and we’ll deal with it later.” He turns and sits back down with a huff, Cas joining him a moment later with a tiny smile of victory.

When Jess asks, Dean explains that he hurt his shoulder at work – not by chasing criminals, but during a training exercise. She asks him about his job, and he explains that he’s been with the police department for a couple of years now, after leaving his bachelor’s program to get his associate’s degree in criminal justice and then going to the police academy. The Winchesters were upset when Dean announced his plans, Sam remembers. His mother was afraid he’d be hurt, his father said he’d be around “too many men” and he wouldn’t be able to meet a nice woman, and Sam thought he was just giving up on his studies because they were too hard. With the lack of family support, Sam had been surprised that Dean still went ahead and did it anyway. He wonders how Dean afforded the apartment he and Cas were in by that time. He realizes he’s been staring into space when Jess says, “And you’re a nurse, Cas?”

“Yes. I work in the Emergency Department.”

“Do you like it?”

“I do, but really I only stay in that department in case Dean’s shot in the ass again.”

“It was my thigh!” Dean says indignantly.

“It was your left ass cheek, just above your thigh. Stop trying to be cool about it.”

“He was a terrible nurse to me,” Dean whines to Jess. “Everyone else he’s all sweet and caring and professional, the best nurse you could ever have, and me he called a dumbass and made fun of me when I was doped up and wouldn’t leave me the hell alone.”

“Ow! Something bit me!” Cas says in his best imitation of Forrest Gump and cackles. Dean scowls and sticks out his tongue at Cas, then looks at Jess and says, “You see what I put up with?”

“He kept quoting *Forrest Gump*!”

“You took advantage of my injured status.”

“Well, yeah,” Cas shrugs. “I couldn’t miss an opportunity like that.”

Sam watches the conversation and isn’t quite sure if they’re joking or not.

They decide to head into the city to do some shopping and grab lunch. Dean starts a roast in the slow cooker while Cas feeds the cat, then they disappear to get ready and Sam and Jess do the same. As they’re preparing for the day, Sam hears the litany of complaints back and forth between his brother and his friend:

“Dude, you need to scrape this down and soak it. Not with the wire brush, man!”

“Would you *please* rinse your shaving bits out of the damn sink? Other people have to use this!”

“Cas, move over, and for fuck’s sake squeeze the toothpaste from the bottom, not the middle! Were you raised in a barn?”

“Dean, so help me, if I trip over this shelving unit you *still* haven’t assembled one more time...”

“I’m gonna suffocate you with your own socks if you don’t start putting them in the hamper that is *literally three feet away*.”

“We *don’t* ‘conserve water’ when we have guests, no matter how much you think it’s fine to let your yellow ‘mellow.’ Flush the damn toilet!”

“I don’t know how the hell they live together,” Sam mutters to Jess, who finds it all hilarious. He mutters “traitor” under his breath.

They split up into two pairs at the mall – Cas with Sam and Dean with Jess. As they shop for new swim trunks, Sam remembers how much he likes Cas. In all of the fights he and Dean had, Sam usually thought Cas was the one in the right, but that could be because it was his duty as a younger brother to side against his older brother no matter what. They stop at a drugstore so Cas can pick up sunscreen and an array of snacks for Dean when Cas’ phone rings. He looks down at it and smiles, turning slightly away from Sam.

“Nurse Novak, where can I stick you today?” he rumbles low into the phone, and Sam feels himself blush. Clearly this is a private call with whoever is on the other end of the line. He turns to walk away when Cas’ demeanor turns on a dime; he laughs and says, “You suck,” then laughs again at whatever response he receives and says, “You wish. What’s up?” Sam watches in confusion as Cas hums excitedly in response to whatever the caller is saying. “Okay. Mmmhmm. Yeah. 3:30? Great. Hey, you guys ready for lunch? Okay, meet you at the entrance we came in. Bye.” He ends the call and turns to Sam. “We’re looking at a house this afternoon and Jess has already spoken for you and said you’re coming.”

“Who’s looking for a house?”

“Dean and I?” he says slowly, waiting for Sam to catch up.

“A house. You guys? Like, to rent?”

“To buy. Come on. We’ll tell you about it at lunch.”

They meet up and climb into Dean’s classic Chevrolet Impala. Dean, Cas and Jess are smiling, and Sam just feels confused and concerned.

“We’re gonna go to Bright Life,” Dean calls into the back.

“Dean, we don’t have to go there,” Cas argues.

“Why not? We like it there, it’s fine and it’s all gluten-free.”

“They may not like it. It’s an acquired taste.”

“Nobody *acquires* a *taste* for gluten-free hamburger rolls, Cas, but if they toast ‘em they’re good and, more importantly, you can eat there.”

“You hate parking Baby there, and I can eat lots of places...”

“We know for sure it’s safe there.”

“Really, Dean. I don’t mind. Let’s go to Breakers or something...”

“No,” Dean says in frustration. “Last time we went there you got sick from cross-contamination.”

“We don’t know for sure if that was the cause...”

“Shut up. We’re here,” he says gruffly. Cas sighs in acquiescence. The woman at the counter greets Dean and Cas with familiarity, and they smile and engage in small talk as the four order from the menu board before sitting down.

They tell Sam and Jess about their house hunt, and Sam throws out the occasional question about whether they’re ready to make such a big leap. No one else seems to think it’s a big deal, but Sam is worried about them making a large investment when they always seem to be fighting. When Dean and Cas head up to the counter to order dessert, Sam whispers, “I don’t think they should be doing this.” Jess scrunches up her forehead and shakes her head in question, but they return before she can ask anything more.

They wrap up lunch in time to head out to the house showing. After a 30 minute drive, they pull into a neighborhood of nearly-identical Colonial homes with neatly manicured lawns. Dean parks the car at a two-story about halfway down the street, a white Colonial with blue shutters. Their agent, Linda, meets them at the door and takes them around.

“So, still convinced they’re not a couple?” Jess teases Sam.

“Jess, I haven’t seen them do one romantic thing. At all. They argue constantly. They’re friends, somehow, but that’s it.”

“Uh huh. So buying a house together isn’t convincing?”

“It doesn’t convince me they’re a couple. It just convinces me they’re stupid.”

“You’re ignoring the evidence, Mr. Future Lawyer.”

Back at the apartment eating a delicious pot roast, Jess asks with an air of innocence, “So, how long have you guys been a couple?” Sam nearly chokes on a potato.

“Six years on Thursday,” Dean says as he shoots a little smile at Cas.

“Six *loooooooong* years,” Cas sighs dramatically, but winks at Dean and moves the hand that’s under the table toward him.

“Aww, that’s sweet! Tell me how it happened!”

Dean launches into the story of how they met as five-year-olds with a few details that Sam didn’t know (after Dean stole Cas’ police car and made him cry, Dean gave him his favorite

stuffed animal as an apology and he still has it in storage), then Cas explains how they started dating (“We just finished a debate about whether people really have free will when he reached out and kissed me”). Jess asks them more and more questions, and Sam watches their eyes shine as they tell her about little things in their relationship that Dean never shared with him. Sam works to reconcile what he’s seeing and hearing with what he’s seen and heard over the last few years and even over the last two days, and he can’t quite figure it out. He chalks it up to people getting sappy when they reminisce and still isn’t convinced about their compatibility, even if they are, apparently, a couple.

They move to the couch and Dean pipes up with a question about capital punishment. “So the other day Cas and I were talking about capital punishment and whether it should be legal or not. I say yes, Cas says no. What about you guys?”

Sam gets very uncomfortable very quickly. “Uh, Jess, what do you think?”

“I wanna hear what you think first,” she replies, face open and ready to listen.

“I don’t really have an opinion,” he says. Not true, but he doesn’t want to cause a fight.

“C’mon, Sam. The punishment should fit the crime, right?” Dean tries to cajole his brother.

Cas pipes up. “But if we as a society are saying it’s a crime because it’s morally repugnant to kill a human, then isn’t it still morally repugnant to kill a human even if that human already did? Are some human lives worth more than others? That opens up a lot of moral gray area. Who decides which lives mean more or less?”

And here they go, Sam thinks as he watches the two of them turn toward each other on the couch, leaning forward with elbows in their laps. He doesn’t know why Dean and Cas have to open up cans of worms all the time. They’re hotly debating the issue, Jess listening with bright eyes and speaking up when she has a point to make. “Can we talk about something else?” he asks. They ignore him as they continue.

“Okay, so as a nurse, Cas, you get a serial killer, or a bomber or something. He’s killed a bunch of people. He codes when you’re in the room. You’d try to save his life?”

“I have to, Dean.”

“But if you could get away with it?”

“I can’t let someone *die*, Dean.”

“What about the grieving families of the victims?”

“Killing their killer won’t make them feel better and it won’t bring their loved ones back. And I imagine he has a family who might grieve him, too. Is it right to make them suffer?”

“Okay, point. But how do you know it won’t make the victims’ families feel better? Or what if the guy’s a piece of shit who hurts his own family? What if this guy says he’s gonna leave and do it again? What if you had the chance to stop him once and for all? You wouldn’t take it?”

“I can’t withhold treatment and I’m not sure I could kill someone.”

“What if the guy killed me, huh? Or some future kid of ours? Would you save him?”

“I wouldn’t be put on the case, obviously.”

“Okay, so if he snuck out of the hospital and then dropped outside like he’s having a heart attack or something, would you save him?”

Cas quiets a moment, then says, “No.”

Dean latches on like a dog with a bone. “Would you kill him if you knew he killed me or our kid yet he was acquitted? If he’s walking out the door a free man and you *knew* he murdered me, or our kid, you *witnessed* it...”

“I’d kill him,” he growls softly.

“Me too, Cas. I would, too. That’s what I mean.”

“But then *I* would need to take the punishment for that. What if I killed him because he killed our child, and then they wanted to send me to Death Row?”

“Well, that’s different...”

“How?”

“Okay!” Sam interrupts. “You guys are stressing me out. I’m gonna just... go to bed.”

Dean glances at the clock. “Sammy, it’s 8:00.”

“I know, I just... good night.”

Jess, Cas and Dean watch Sam slam the bedroom door behind him.

Sam wakes on Wednesday morning to the sound of Dean and Cas coming in from a run.

“Since when do you run?” Sam asks as he collapses into a kitchen chair.

“Since Sergeant Hard Ass makes me,” Dean says, thumbing at Cas, who smirks.

“God help me, I want you to be around for a while,” Cas says in response.

Dean laughs and bumps Cas with his shoulder. His phone rings and he answers, beckoning Cas closer so he can hear. Sam watches as they look at each other hopefully and Cas speaks into the mouthpiece, “Yes. We can be there in half an hour. Thank you, Linda, thank you so much.” They hang up and both of them shoot into the room where Jess is just starting to awaken. Sam hears the three of them squealing and soon Jess comes racing out of the bedroom, half dressed and yelling at Sam to get ready.

“What the hell is going on?” he asks.

Jess prattles on excitedly as she tries not to slosh coffee onto herself, and Sam has difficulty following her words. “There’s a house they really wanted to see but it went under contract before they could, but it fell through and their agent called to get them in to see it! Come on!”

Half an hour later, they pull up to a renovated Craftsman on a dead-end street. All of the houses look a little different, each of them possessing the character of their years. Mature trees grow in the yards and the street names are simple and without theme: Oak, Pleasant, Jefferson, Oriole.

They walk into the house and take a look around. Some of the rooms have been renovated, while others have been left to the years and to the next owner. Sam hears Dean and Cas debating paint colors in one room, the merits of a bay window in another, and then a heated argument about whether they need to spend the extra money to get a radon test.

They fill out some paperwork with their agent, who says she’ll let them know if their offer is accepted, and soon they’re heading back home. On the way, Dean and Cas argue about the home inspection, the down payment, and what they should do in the event of a counteroffer. They’re entering the apartment and arguing about whether to roll costs for renovations into their mortgage when Sam has had enough.

“Guys! Stop! I can’t keep watching this. Do you two even know what the hell you’re doing?” They stare at him blankly while Jess looks on in dread. “You guys are a wreck. You can’t even agree on paint colors. Do you really think you should be buying a house together when your relationship could implode at any minute?” Jess’ dread turns to horror as he continues, “You guys should think long and hard about this. It’s a huge commitment, do you understand that? Do you think getting a cat and buying a house is going to save your relationship? Because it’s not. You guys need to figure yourselves out before you do something like this, don’t you think?”

Jess is staring at him, slack-jawed. Cas watches him without a word, but his eyes glisten and he furrows his brows. Dean, finally, speaks up.

“Sam,” he says through clenched teeth in a quiet, threatening tone Sam has never heard directed at him, “Cas and I are gonna go to our room now so I don’t punch you in your goddamn face. When I am calm, we’re gonna talk about what the *fuck* you *think* you know about my relationship with Cas. ‘Cause from where I’m standing, you don’t know jack shit.” He takes Cas’ hand and they leave the room, slamming the door behind them.

“Sam Winchester, I am so pissed at you right now. You should be ashamed of yourself,” Jess growls as she, too, enters a bedroom and slams the door.

Sam is beginning to think he misread the situation.

An hour goes by. Sam thinks he hears crying, which is confirmed when Dean opens the bedroom door to get a glass of water from the kitchen and leaves it ajar, revealing both Dean’s and Cas’ tear-streaked faces. Sam watches him, but Dean offers nothing in return, not even acknowledgment of his presence. Cas meets him at the door, and Dean caresses his face

tenderly as Cas pulls him into a soft kiss. Dean kicks the door closed behind him absently with his foot, not separating from Cas' lips. Another hour goes by. Sam texts Jess, who doesn't answer. He hears talking, then laughing and cheering, then some sort of muffled noises from Dean and Cas' room that he doesn't want to think too hard about. He sits alone on the couch and wonders how the hell he got into this mess.

Dean emerges, walking backwards out of the bedroom and laughing softly at something Cas says. Sam catches a few words: sweetheart, stress relief, love you. He closes the door gently and rounds the corner to sit across from Sam on the couch. He's flushed and wearing sweatpants, a t-shirt that Cas wore yesterday, and a hint of a smile that is surely left over from Cas and not something meant for Sam. He confirms as much as his face grows serious.

"Cas convinced me that I need to give you the benefit of the doubt, so instead of ripping you a new one, I'm gonna give you the chance to explain why the *fuck* you decided to shit on my relationship." Sam stares at him, all of his arguments escaping his brain. "Well? Clearly, since you've been in a relationship for eight months, you know way more than us, who've been in a relationship for six years. Explain yourself, O Wise One."

"It's just..." Sam starts and dares to look at his older brother. He's glaring at him, arms crossed and jaw set. He's not sure he's ever seen Dean so angry. But he has to point things out to Dean, for his own good, just in case he's been right all along. "You guys fight all the time. You fight about little shit all day long, you get into heated arguments about major stuff like free will and capital punishment, and you guys have a history of getting into some blowouts, man. And you're doing all this stuff that isn't you – you're jogging and you don't even drink *real beer* anymore and you've got a cat. You're allergic! I just think that maybe you're so used to being around him 'cause you grew up together that maybe you haven't, you know, seen enough of the world, met other people. I just don't want you to limit yourself because he's the safe choice."

Dean's stare is cold and hard. "You done?"

Sam sighs and runs his fingers roughly through his hair. "I just don't want you to end up like Mom and Dad. This is the exact same stuff they did, and look how they ended up – miserable and divorced."

Dean shakes his head ruefully. "Little shit was right," he mutters. He looks up at his brother, the hard lines of his face softening. "Cas thought this might be about them."

"Dean, you saw what a mess they made our lives with all their..."

"Stop," he says, the edge in his voice still there, but fading. "I'm gonna explain a few things to you, Sam, alright? 'Cause I know mom and dad's shit fucked you up, but Cas and I are *nothing* like them. First of all, Cas and I haven't been fighting, so I don't even know where you're getting that."

"Dean, you've been fighting the entire time we've been here!"

"About what? Gimme examples, 'cause I have no idea what you're talking about."

“Hair in the sink. Restaurants. Whether he’d kill someone. Money. The cat. Want me to go on?”

Dean twists his face in bemusement. “That shit? That’s not fighting, Sam. That shit’s bickering, or debating, or discussing, or just giving each other a hard time because we can, but it’s not fighting.”

“Mom and Dad did that stuff all the time, too.”

“No, Sam, Mom and Dad *fought*. They disagreed about stuff, but they didn’t actually talk it out. They didn’t understand each other’s points of view, and they didn’t try to. They didn’t respect each other. They just tried to outdo each other, to hammer their opinions over each other until someone got their way. Cas and I don’t do that.

“Here’s the thing. Cas and I have strong personalities, just like Mom and Dad. It’s one of the reasons we had those ‘blowouts’ when we were kids, ‘cause when you’re a kid you don’t know how to be considerate of other people yet. With strong personalities come strong opinions, and we’re both pretty vocal. But what Mom and Dad lost somewhere in their marriage was their respect and love for each other. Cas and I have that, you know?” Sam shrugs, not quite convinced.

“Okay, let me break this down more. So when we bicker about the little shit, that’s just because we’re different people. You’ll never agree with everything someone else likes or wants or whatever. Plus, living with other people is hard sometimes too. We both have ways we like things, and so when they’re not that way we say something. That’s something we agreed on way back in our relationship, even before we were officially a thing. We learned not to let stuff sit and fester like Mom and Dad did. It just makes you resentful.

“When we talk about that controversial stuff that makes you squeamish – and dude, if you’re gonna be a lawyer, you’ve gotta nut up – but when we talk about that, it’s *fun* for us. I *like* to rile him up and make him think, and he likes to do the same to me. We respect each other enough to talk about shit like that. I don’t care what opinion he has on most of that stuff. He can have whatever opinions he wants, and he feels the same about me. We just like to push each other to be better, you know? He challenges me in ways no one else does. Most people think I’m just a dumb cop, man, but he doesn’t. Besides, most of that shit doesn’t matter in everyday life. We agree on the stuff that matters. You get it?” Sam nods. It’s starting to make a little bit of sense.

“And I don’t know what you’re talking about, saying that I’m doing stuff I don’t wanna do. He doesn’t force me to do anything I don’t wanna do. Yeah, some of the things I do are *for* him, but not because he makes me. I want to. Like the whole eating gluten-free thing. I do that because it’s the safest thing for him to have a house where he can’t get sick, and I want to be able to kiss him without worrying about what I ate ‘cause it freaks me out to think I could make him sick. The jogging? He worries about my health so I do it. It gives us time together and I actually do feel better. And he didn’t force me to get the cat. I brought Spike home as a surprise for him because I wanted to, and I get allergy shots because I want to. That’s it.

“And as for that other shit about sticking with someone who’s comfortable and not meeting other people? Bullshit. I’ve met plenty of people, and I have never wanted anyone the way I

want Cas. Not even close. Why should I give that up just because I figured it out early in life?"

"But Dean," Sam says, "I mean, bickering is all I ever see you do. I don't see you guys, like, holding hands or anything. The first time I saw you kiss was just a little while ago!"

"So, you're saying that we need to be into PDA to prove we love each other? Jesus, Sammy..."

"I'm just saying..."

"Dude. One, we're private people, and PDA's never really been our thing. Two, we've been together a long time. We don't have to be humping each other at every turn. Three, we turn it down way low when we see you. Four..."

"Why? Why do you turn it down?"

"Because whenever you're around us, you're uncomfortable."

"You turned it down so low I didn't even know you were dating!"

"What? Sammy, how could you not know? Jess knew!"

"I just... never mind, I guess I should've. It's just with all the bickering..."

"Is that why you were uncomfortable around us? The bickering? We just assumed it was the guy-on-guy thing like Dad. Never thought of the other stuff 'cause it doesn't bother us."

"I don't care about two guys kissing or whatever."

"Good to know. Okay, four..." Dean stops and takes a deep breath, then lets it out slowly and rubs his face before continuing, "you're not around to see most of the touchy-feely stuff between us, alright? You don't see him rubbing out the knots in my back after a hard day. You don't see me holding him after he's lost a patient. You don't see us kiss goodbye in the morning or lay on the couch watching a movie. You sure as hell aren't in our bedroom, otherwise you'd be convinced..." Dean cackles as Sam swats him, then grows serious again.

"Sam," Dean says quietly, and Sam senses this is going to be important, something he needs to heed. "You're way smarter than me in so many ways, but I can teach you this, so listen up. Real love that lasts isn't what you seem to think it is. It's not all romance and never having to say you're sorry, you know? And it's not just 'the opposite of Mom and Dad,' because there was a time they were in love, too. Real love is trust and respect and challenge and support. It's when you stick it out when it would be easier not to. It's learning how to have a conversation you don't want to have and it's going through pain you wouldn't have to bear if you were on your own." Dean inhales deeply, thoughtfully, as if he's making a decision. Sam leans in.

"You weren't there when Cas was so sick from Celiac Disease and we didn't know yet what it was," Dean says, speaking lowly and reverently in the way of someone sharing something deeply personal. "I sat with him while they did every embarrassing test known to man and I

wasn't sure if he was ever going to get better, and I was so scared. You weren't there when I was shot and he stayed with me every minute and bossed around his co-workers so that I got the best care, and you weren't there when he held me after the nightmares I had for weeks after because two people died that day. You weren't there to see Cas encouraging me to keep going after I quit my Bachelor's program to do something I really wanted to do and all you guys were against me, or when he took an extra job to support us." He looks up at Sam then, and there's confidence and love in his eyes. "If you were there, man, you never would have said those things about us."

Sam blanches and his stomach drops as he realizes how wrong he was about his brother and the man he loves. "I had no idea," he rasps, unshed tears caught in his breath.

"I know, man, and I get it. Look, I'm not saying the way we do things is how you gotta do things. I'm just saying Cas and I are gonna keep bickering, and I'm gonna keep eating bread and pie crust that taste like cardboard, and I'm gonna keep running because it makes Cas feel better, and he's gonna keep telling me to eat a real pie and he's gonna keep making me the best greasy bacon cheeseburgers even while he's complaining about my health and he's gonna bitch about my Lego sets and help me put them together. We're gonna keep giving each other shit and we're gonna force each other to be better. We're gonna buy a house that's closer to my work because Cas insisted and that has a fenced-in backyard for the cat because I insisted, and we're gonna adopt kids that roll their eyes at us every time we bitch, and we're gonna be old men who sit on the porch and tell the young whippersnappers to get off our lawn. And we're gonna be happy."

Sam smiles, small and so very sorry. "You really love him."

Dean nods once, and without an ounce of doubt says, "He's the love of my life, Sam."

"Shit," Sam says, rubbing his face in his hands. "Mom and Dad could've learned a lot from you two."

"Yeah, well, it's too late for them, but not for us. And not for you and Jess," he says as he points to the door. "Go talk to her. When you guys are done, we'll have lunch before you guys take off for Jess' parents' house." Sam nods and drags himself to the bedroom door, knocking but getting no response.

"Hey, Jess?" Dean calls just over Sam's shoulder. "It's cool. Sam has realized he's an idiot."

The door creaks open, and Sam walks in to endure his fate.

Half an hour later, Dean is making sandwiches and Castiel is playing with Spike in the living room when Sam and Jess emerge, faces splotchy from crying but smiling all the same. Jess moves into the kitchen to help Dean while Sam sits near Cas and pulls a string for the tiny feline.

"I'm sorry, Cas," Sam murmurs. "I'm really, really sorry."

Cas continues playing with the cat. "Your brother is a good man. I love him very much."

“I know. He loves you too... like, really, really loves you.”

Cas smiles and looks at Sam. “I know. And I forgive you, Sam.”

They enjoy a late lunch in a very different atmosphere than the last few days, a bright excitement of hope. Cas and Dean share that their offer was accepted and they'll be moving into their new home in thirty days. Sam and Jess talk about their plans for the future, something they haven't dared discuss with each other before. Sam and Jess hold hands. Dean and Cas give each other knowing looks that Sam understands much differently now.

Sam and Jess notice the suitcases at the door as they pull their own out of the spare bedroom/office. “Going somewhere?” Jess asks.

“Dean is taking me away for a few days for our anniversary,” Cas smiles as he wraps an arm around Dean's waist and Dean kisses his temple, now that they both feel freer to do so.

“Aww, so romantic! Flying?”

“Oh, God forbid, no,” Cas ribs Dean, who sticks out his tongue at him.

“Come on. You like road trips.”

“Yes, but we could take my car. It's much more fuel-efficient...”

“No way! Baby is *made* for road trips! You can't keep a classic like her at home. It'll hurt her feelings!”

“Dean, we need to talk about your anthropomorphizing of your vehicle,” Cas remarks, a smile tickling the side of his mouth.

“You are a huge pain in my ass.”

“Huge?”

“Colossal,” Dean purrs, wrapping an arm around his shoulders and wiggling his eyebrows.

“Thanks for the compliment,” Cas smiles, then laughs as Dean presses a kiss to his lips and hums suggestively.

“Aaaand that's our cue to leave,” Sam comments loudly and Jess coos at the couple.

Hugs are exchanged all around, with promises to visit more often.

“Think we'll ever bicker like an old married couple the way they do?” Jess asks Sam as he pulls their rental away from his brother's home (for one more month, anyway).

“I hope so,” he smiles and takes her hand as they drive away.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!